593
182
462 The conversation becomes animated and laughter spreads. In the dark
prairie the camp fires burn. Around the fire, the only protection
against the cold which descends, behind the frail windbreak of palms
[342] and branches hastily planted in the ground on the side where wind or
[415] rain is expected; near the baskets filled with poor objects which con-
stitute their whole earthly treasure; lying on the ground which ex-
tends around, haunted only by other bands equally hostile and fear-
ful, the couples, embracing tightly, are truly seen as the support of
one another, the comfort, the only help against the daily difficulties
and the dreamy melancholy invades the Nambikwara soul from
time to time. The visitor who camps in the brush with the Indians
for the first time feels tenderness as well as anguish and pity before
the spectacle of this humanity so completely unprotected; crushed,
apparently against the soil of a hostile land by some implacable
cataclysm; naked, shivering around the hesitant fires. He circulates
tip-toe among the underbrush, in the dark, avoiding crushing in his
walk a hand, an arm, a trunk, whose warm reflections are seen by
the light of the fires. But this misery is animated by whispering
and laughter. [56] The couples clasp one another as in the nostalgia
of a lost union. Their caresses, at the same time tender and candid,
are not interrupted by the passage of the stranger. One senses in all
[57] of them an immense gentleness, a profound carelessness, a naive
and charming animal satisfaction, and, emanating from all that,
something like the most moving and credible expression of human
tenderness.

593 Thus it is not surprising that the attitude of the two sexes as con-
831 cerns one another is characterized by intense interest. This interest
462 is translated in certain cases by the vocabulary. In fact the Nambikwara
542 have only one word to express "pretty" and "young," and a single word to
[517] signify "ugly" and "old" (munjene, jelene, bl). Their esthetic
judgments are thus based essentially on human considerations, and
above all, sexual ones. But the interest which is manifested between
the sexes is of a complex nature. Men judge women in a mass, as
being a little different from themselves. Depending on the situation,
they consider them with desire, admiration, or tenderness. In itself
the confusion of terms pointed out above constitutes permanent
homage. But it must not be forgotten that the form of economic
adaptation realized by sexual division of labor a capital role attributes
to the women, since family life rests to a very large degree (probably
the greatest) on the collecting of the women, but it represents an
[58] inferior type of activity. The ideal life is conceived on the model
of agricultural production or hunting. To have plenty of manioc, and

fat pieces of meat is a constantly relished dream, even though rarely realized. On the other hand, the provisions haphazardly collected are considered—and really are—the daily misery. In Nambikwara folklore, the expression "to eat grasshoppers" (tʃigwe ũʔtige, bl), a typically feminine and infantile harvest, is nearly equivalent to the French "to eat the mad cow" (to rough it). At the same time the woman is considered a tender and good being, but of the second order. The language which she uses habitually separates her from the men and unites her with the children (in the same way that she collaborates with the children in expeditions of collecting and gleaning). We shall see later that this assimilation also continues into the metaphysical thinking and that, on this latter plan, discrimination between the sexes attains proportions whose psychological attitudes are only a derisive indication. It is considered well-bred for men to speak of women with a pitying good will, and, in conversations between the two sexes, to address them with a slightly mocking indulgence. Certain sayings are heard often among men speaking among themselves:

5. ũʔtnoʃunatuʃkhne joʔotnuʃutnãdnjani denejunatukhne. (bl)
The children do not know, I know, the women do not know.

and they bring up the group of women (dosu, al), their jokes, their conversations, with a tone of tenderness and mockery. But, of course, that is only [57] a social attitude. When the man finds himself alone with his wife around the camp fire, he listens to her complaints, considers her demands attentively, asks her help in a hundred undertakings. The male line of talk disappears, and gives way to the collaboration of two partners conscious of the essential value which they have for one another.

This ambiguity of male attitude as regards women has its exact correspondence in the equally ambivalent behavior of the female group. The women think of themselves collectively, and manifest it in several ways. In the first place they do not talk like the men. Even though a sexual language does not exist in the true sense of the word, in conversation a thousand inflections, shades of pronunciation are found which are typically feminine. Women articulate badly and affect a sort of jabbering which is reminiscent of infants' pronunciation. They whisper instead of talking out loud, and emit sounds with an affected mannerism and preciosity which are at times seductive when they are not exasperating. Thus, in dialect al, they give words an ending —ʃu instead of the usual —su or —tu. They also pronounce—kititu, the verbal suffix which is for men, —kedjutu or —kedjuzu.

It is certain that they are perfectly aware of this peculiarity. When one does not understand them and asks them to repeat, they exaggerate maliciously, and more each time, the style that is particular to them, and when one desists, discouraged, they laugh and exchange jokes. They have succeeded. This is especially true of young women who do not yet have children, and of young concubines. The mothers and older women stress these differences less, although one also finds them among this group upon occasion. Besides, the young women like the society of children and adolescents, play and joke constantly with them; and it is the women who take care of the animals in that very human way peculiar to certain South American Indians. All this contributes to creating a special atmosphere around the women, in the interior of the group, at the same time child-like, happy, affected and provocative, in which the men participate when they return from the hunt or the gardens.

But a completely different attitude is manifested among the women when they are to undertake some one of the forms of activity which are especially intrusted to them. They accomplish their tasks as artisans with ability and patience, in the solitary camp, arranged in a circle and with their backs to one another, and, during trips they valiantly carry the heavy basket which contains the provisions and riches of the whole family and the quiver of arrows, while the husband walks ahead with the bow and one or two arrows, the wooden spear or the digging implement, looking for the flight of an animal or a fruit tree. One sees these women then, the forehead bound with the tump line, the back completely covered by the wide basket in the form of an inverted bell, walking for kilometers with their characteristic step: [58] the thighs very tense, the knees together, the ankles turned out, the feet turned in; leaning on the outer edge of the foot and moving the hips, courageous, energetic and gay. We give on the opposite page a chart of the division of tasks between the sexes, but this division should be interpreted in a less strict manner than usual for phenomena of this type. Among the Nambikwara collaboration between husband and wife is carried so far that many tasks are done jointly. More exactly, if the man rarely intervenes in feminine tasks, the woman on the other hand (and above all the supplementary wives in case of polygamy) unceasingly aid their husband. We have indicated by crosses between parentheses the cases where a task attributed to one sex is occasionally practiced by the other. Thus, when they are alone or among themselves, the men do the carrying, but they do not carry from the forehead (senasikititu, al).

1: Levi-Strauss-112 E-5 (1938-1939)1948 SP17 Nambicuara SP17

789 of warm air, aided by small fragments of paper put over a fire, was at least accepted, is not understood. And as usual when it is a question of excusing an incident (which could have had very unhappy consequences), they put all the blame on the women, "who do not understand anything," "were afraid" and feared a thousand calamities. (1)

1, Later, Al asked for some balloons to give a demonstration himself before the combined groups assembled by him. But, less forgetful than he, we obstinately refused.

Two conclusions are gleaned from these facts. The first is [98] that the term of nãnde covers much more than the strict meaning of the word "poison," and that it includes all types of actions of exceptional and likewise menacing character, as well as the products or objects likely to determine this action. All nãnde objects and operations have a common character, expressed by the term kakore. This means the dangerous products or substances, and, at the same time, those of a menacing or dangerous nature which certain living beings may possess by specific or only temporary right. Thus poison, the snake, the poisonous spider, the jaguar, are kakore; but the same is true of an enemy tribe, or an Indian (even if he is a [98] relative or friend) when he projects revenge or is found in a state of violent anger. The second conclusion is that the poisons, whatever may be the positive and utilitarian character of their preparation, are not thought of scientifically as substances provoking physiological disorders, but as vehicles or receptacles of that mysterious force which turns the usual order of phenomena upside down. Nevertheless, nãnde is not conceived of in the abstract form of a power. It resides in, and cannot be separated from, certain apparently recognizable material aspects. When the Indians examined our balloons of silk paper, they sought something there which would be the concrete sign of their magical and malevolent nature; and while they proceeded with their inspection, we wondered anxiously what could be the specific characteristics (happily absent) of the product or the nãnde object. If it is true that the sense of the term nãnde is more complex than that of the word poison, it is no less necessary to recognize that poison carries the better example and the more perfect illustration of the Indian conception. It is a clearly identified substance, and recognizable by its outward characteristics to which its evil effects necessarily correspond.

§36 who seem to be susceptible to violent passions. We knew an Indian who fled with a Paresi Indian girl during our stay, and lived with her for several months hidden in the bush and fleeing the husband who was in hot pursuit after them. Here is the way an informant (B15) tells of a former adventure. He reconstructs a dialogue with the beloved woman:

51. ajadarinjẽ — otendinjẽ — ajdotẽha ãdakwajaini pumadajẽ ajhajtaxijẽndige tamimedinjẽ (b1)
Do you want to make love?--I do not wish to. --You are worth nothing! I want to make love or I will kill you! Let us go make love.

Very anxiously the woman responds:

higekanhẽ gairirẽ gairidedinjẽ etẽdahẽ dungrajeni (b1)
Do it quickly, my husband will be angry, he will beat me.

There is no social sanction against adultery; but the wronged husband can avenge himself in a fearful manner and in circumstances of this type poison, used either against the wife or against the lover, plays its role. In order to avoid such incidents, the companions intervene between the adversaries and counsel the seducer to disappear for a while:

52. ijehetnjẽ ajkwakatednjẽni ekudde ekudde ekudde ekudde ekudde ekudde ekudde ekudde ekudde kajẽdodni wajknoreniani (b1)
Go away. --I am going far away. --When this moon is ended and that one, and that one, and that one, and that one, and that one, and that one, then, in that one, you may return.

We knew an Indian (C11) whose wife disappeared one day, having left with a member of his group. He thought first of revenge, but his companions intervened, and it was finally decided that the lover should keep the wife and would give him a dog as compensation. Several months later, the lover died (we were not able to find out whether the death was normal or accidental), and the woman returned to her husband, who said he was very happy to have acquired the dog also. This story should not be interpreted in the sense of an equivalence, conceived by the Indian spirit, between a woman and a dog. We have insisted too much on the fundamental role of the woman in Nambikwara life to have to return to that here. But in groups where trade [112] exists in such a primitive form (1) exchanges of goods have as a

1. Cf. p. 93 f.

American Indians. As example of the first aspect we shall mention: the public and "scientific" preparation of the curare; the development of certain therapeutics such as the treatment of ophthalmia by instillation; the flexibility of the sexual division of labor; sexual life in general; the atmosphere of the rites of abstinence; the rational attitude as regards alimentary taboos. Several remarks on this point will make clear the indigenous psychology. The white worms (anathu, a1) which are frequently found in the nuts of the bacaiuva palm have been indicated as being inedible. Subsequently we verified that they were eaten in secret by the children. Thus a8 finds them while cracking nuts and gives them to her little sister a9; and furtively she too eats a worm. Her action is noticed by a3 and a4 who cover her with sarcasm. However one day when food is scarce, A1 eats a plate of worms which his young wife a4 has gathered for him, and sadly remarks that, due to lack of meat, he is reduced to this poor fare. The same observation is made about the hawk. Above we showed what constitutes the metaphysical basis of the alimentary taboo concerning the jaguar. However, the current interpretation is entirely different:

66. ujatedednẽ̃ yiliẽe (h1).

I don't eat any of it, it smells bad!

In the face of new situations, the Indians generally react without mysticism. Thus, A1 before the problem of writing: (1) on the other hand,

1. P. 40 f. and p. 89.

the Nambikwara show total indifference toward photography, even when they have understood its purpose. We have never found [126] Indians who tolerated the participation of the camera in the slightest details of their intimate life with such complete indifference.

However, the passage to irrational positions is made with the same brusqueness which characterizes the two attitudes, almost simultaneous, of an infant hilarity before the still unusual sight of an inflated balloon which burns, and of an appeal to evil magic when a second balloon succeeded in rising. (1) Never does the tender indulgence with which the men surround

1. P. 97.

their companions (2) allow one to suspect the actual metaphysical curse

2. P. 86 f.

with which the women are burdened in the Nambikwara culture, excluded under pain of death from collective ceremonies, deaf and blind to the voice

of the Beyond, and condemned to nothingness after death like non-initiated babies. We have described the tender companionship which presides in the relationships between the sexes, and the general harmony which reigns within the groups. But when these are altered, it is to give way to the most extreme solutions, poisoning and murder. It is quite reasonable for the informants to underline spontaneously the role of forgetfulness in funeral rites. (3)

3. P. 112.

For there is a striking contrast between the joyous irony with which one answers someone who is ignorant enough to inquire about a relative deceased for quite awhile: "ihitu, ilgetu" (a1), "to the sand! in the sand!," and the horrible apparition of the atatu which is evoked with ritual sobbing.

Nambikwara rites do not seem to be symbolic in any way. The skeleton-like state of A21 and a22 at the end of the period of abstinence testifies to that, and although ceremonies are rare, they are carried far. The informants speak of periods of three months for the isolation of the young girl entering puberty, and of a bath in the river lasting a whole night as a preliminary to marriage. However much behavior is supple and without complication in daily life, likewise intrusions of the supernatural (in visions and revelations, the séances of shamanism, war dances, etc.) are manifested by the transition to an atmosphere of tragedy. No South American group, to our knowledge, expresses in such a sincere and spontaneous way (for one never feels the theatrical atmosphere of Tupi or chaqueno shamanism) such violent and opposed sentiments, whose individual expression seems inseparable from a social stylization which never betrays them.

* * * * *

It is far from us to wish to assign an exclusively economic cause to this dualism. Nevertheless, it is astonishing to consider that the psychological dualism goes on an equal footing with the organization of social existence around [127] two opposite poles, on the one hand the sedentary life, agricultural, based on the dual masculine activity of the construction of huts and of gardening; on the other hand, the nomadic period, during which subsistence is principally assured by feminine collecting and gathering, the one representing alimentary security and well-being, the other chance and want. To these two ways of life, one followed in the winter, the other in the summer, the Nambikwara react in very different ways. They speak of the former with the melancholy which is attached to the conscious and resigned acceptance of the human condition, to the dull repetition of identical acts,

6: Levi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1943
SP17 Nambicuara SP17



lateral or the patrilateral cross cousin; nevertheless, the chosen interpretation stresses the male side in Nambikuara society, or, let us say, it shows a strong tendency in this direction. At the same time we can see in such a solution a specifically social structure beginning to superimpose itself on the formerly simple familial units. 571 607 582

We do not intend in any way to base a theory of the origin of dual organizations on these restricted observations, the character of which is mainly anecdotal. However, this is a case where "the characteristic features of the sib organization are in some measure prefigured among sibless tribes";[1] as a matter of fact, in order to fulfil the main requirements of a system of exogamic moieties, it would be sufficient for the new unit, once fixed, to retain the recollection of its dual origin by preserving the habit of not mingling the camp fires. 571 607

Moreover, the extension of the "brother-in-law" relationship provides an instance of the increasingly superior position of the men within the group, since it is through the men that group alliances are brought about, just as wars are waged by men. 571 607 562

The preceding observations have a further value, since with their help we may be able to interpret sociological information found in the older literature on South America, especially that dealing with the Tupi of the Brazilian coast. 000

There are striking similarities between several features of the Nambikuara kinship system and what may be inferred about the ancient familial organization of the coastal Tupi. When describing small details of Nambikuara daily life, one is often tempted to quote Jean de Léry or Yves d'Evreux, so accurately do their words apply to certain live features of Nambikuara society, notwithstanding the fact that they were written four centuries before this culture became known. As a matter of fact, several metaphysical themes are common to both cultures and, indeed, certain names in the Nambikuara religious vocabulary have a conspicuously Tupi origin. The most important similarities, however, are those involving the kinship systems. In both cultures the same three principles of familial organization are stressed and are apparently similarly expressed: First the dichotomy of the parents' brothers and sisters between parallel uncles and aunts, called "fathers" and "mothers," and cross uncles and aunts, called "fathers-in-law" and "mothers-in-law;" secondly, the marriage of cross cousins with the correlative assimilation of parallel cousins to "brothers" and "sisters"; and, finally, the avuncular marriage, which, among the ancient Tupi, seems to have taken the form of a preferential union between the mother's brother and the sister's daughter. 114 171 601

An excellent text by Anchieta gives evidence of the occurrence of the first principle, as well as showing signs of the existence of the other two: 114 171

[1] Robert H. Lowie, *Family and Sib* (American Anthropologist, Vol. 21), p. 28.

291 around the ankles. The Tagnani and Tawite wear similar bands on
184 their upper and lower limbs; theirs, however, are made of cotton, which is used occasionally by the Cocozu to manufacture articles of this sort. [Plates p. 242.] Among the Tagnani and Tawite [239], men often cover their sexual organs with the ends of the straw cord that encloses their hips. But this is not the rule. The Uaintaçu rarely wear any of those bands; and among all groups, a few of the Indians always go completely naked.

[Fig. 29]

291 The women and pubescent girls, young and old, single and married, always wear the hip cord.

[293] Some pregnant women I saw did not wear it; I believe they had freed their abdomen from this strong pressure in order to breathe more easily, or perhaps for fear that the girdle should have a pernicious influence on the foetus.

302 They always wear their hair long, hanging over the shoulders; they clip it irregularly on the forehead with a bivalve shell or a cane splinter. They liked to have us cut it with scissors.

291 They are extremely fond of the hats we wear; it seemed to me that the heat of the sun on their head distressed them greatly. They will give almost as much for a hat as for an iron axe.

301 One of the jaguar-hide helmets which are now in the [National] Museum was obtained in the village of Urutau in exchange for an old and well-worn hat of ours, in spite of the fact that those helmets are highly prized [by the Indians].

They do not normally wear hide or feather head ornaments. When they are in a festive mood, they cover themselves with crowns [diadems] that will be described later, or with jaguar-hide helmets. It is likely that they also use such ornaments for certain ceremonies, but we ascertained nothing about this.

[Fig. 32]

[240] From their ears they hang triangles of mother-of-pearl, [304] which they extract from river shells; when the hole tears, splitting the lobe in two, they do not hesitate to bore another one.

[562] The men are much vainer than the women; they adorn themselves with feather diadems, earrings, pendants and necklaces, while the women limit themselves to a few of these.

301 imitate our wedding rings; necklaces [242], several meters long, made of black beads; the feathers of black birds; the limbs of coleopters, also black; all attest to this preference.

[Fig. 45]

[237] The women make beautiful one-piece bracelets from the tail rings of the giant armadillo which they polish with wet stones. [See Fig. 65, p. 59A]

[184] The Uaintaçu Nambicuara, who come to Campos Novos by way of the Guaporé and who are much more insolent, crude, wary and suspicious, do not attempt to wear the delicate lip plugs used by their relatives.

Some of them wear a porcupine quill fastened to their lip; others, a wooden splinter or a spike from some tree.

291 562 Also characteristic of the whole Serra do Norte and Juruena Valley is a palm-fiber cape (Inlacu), which hangs down the backbone from the neck. [See Fig. 66, p. 59B.] Women do not wear it; it is another example of male foppishness.

302 Body painting with urucu constitutes part of the ornamentation for men as well as for women.

[Plates, p. 236]

[243] They paint themselves on festive occasions; they do not [515] draw lines on the skin, but smear the dye all over their face. Women, after bathing, redden their whole body in this fashion.

[Fig. 44]

[384] The Indians of the Juruena dissolve the urucu powder in pure water; the Tagnani prepare a paste or cream by mixing the dye with the fat of various animals, and perfume it quite pleasantly by way of some unknown process. (1)

1. The Bororo use mastic resin to perfume the urucu paste. See Alfredo de Andrade, "Estudo dos materiaes corantes [A Study of Coloring Materials]," Archivos do Museu Nacional, Vol. 28, p. 183.

854 Children are treated with great affection and refused nothing. They are rarely punished. Many an Indian, already elderly would walk for leagues [256] with a child on his back to come to us and give the little one some of the presents we were distributing.

622 They have no clearly defined chiefs. Some men the muleteers call chiefs are merely individuals of some influence frequently heeded by the others.

578 622 One day, in Campos Novos, we were visited by the Cocozu and Anunze. Several young men of both groups spent the night there: Nuleke, Krikriceknerá (Manduca), Paixão, Preguiça [Port. "sloth], Damasceno, and the famous Cavagnac, supposed chief of the Urutau village, a scoundrel who used to ambush the muleteers on the Line and take their packs.

On the following day many Uaintaçu came; they were bold, rough, and quite unpleasant people.

The others, when they saw the Uiantaçu approaching, gave signs of agitation. Finally the Uaintaçu arrived, very much excited by the presence of our guests. An endless discussion ensued among the three groups. They all talked and gesticulated in angry fashion, with gleaming eyes, ready to attack each other. Fearing a conflict which would be disastrous on every count, we intervened by distributing cigarettes, matches, axes, etc., in order to distract them. They calmed down. But some of the Cocozu and Uaintaçu boys continued to argue and were gradually surrounded by the others who listened attentively. Two on one side would speak; two from the other side would reply. The two Indians who talked, Damasceno and Cavagnac, were more intelligent, clever and bold. There was nothing to indicate that they were true chiefs, recognized as such on every occasion. They were temporary chiefs.

622 Among the Tagnani and Tawite, on the other hand, there are clearly defined secular chiefs. One of them stood out because he wore no ornaments whatever [257]. He actually commanded and was obeyed by all. He had three wives.

562 The status of the Nambicuara woman is not so degraded as that of other Brazilian Indian women. She works hard, it is true. She [562] gathers fruit, grates manioc, handles the mortar and pestle, erects the hunting shelters, spins cotton, carries the family belongings, cares for the children, takes part in cultivating the plot; but usually she is

542 treated with great affection. The men are jealous of their wives, and
[137] the women take pride in being faithful. In this respect they are quite unlike their neighbors, the Paressi women...

832 The couples are always petting each other, and no caress seems
302 sweeter and more tender to the lover than the woman's fingers running through his hair. This is easy to understand, for the Nambicuara head swarms with vermin...

[Fig. 38]

585 According to reports of the soldier Gouveia, marriage is a simple ceremony. The man asks the father of his beloved for consent to the union. If the father agrees, he gives the bridegroom a bow and a sheaf of arrows, telling him that with these weapons he must support the family he is about to form. That is all.

851 To show that a boy is the son of a certain man, they use in
201 their innocence an expressive gesture: they join the thumb and index finger of the left hand, in the shape of a ring, around the right extended index finger. Then they tap the child and father on the shoulder, saying "Uétü!" (son).

888 They show great respect for old people and spare them all possible effort. When we returned from the village on the Urutau to the post on the Juina, they had us carry [258] on the bow of our saddles the baskets of two old men from the group that accompanied us in search of gifts. The young men and the women all carried their own aticú and did not ask for help.

771 As to their religion, we know only that it is fetishistic. We know nothing of its cult or system, and even less of its dogma. [Fig. 33]

821 The northern groups seem to be tending toward astrolatry. Once
[771] when I had threatened the moon and the stars with an arrow, poised ready on a strung bow, several Tagnani rose abruptly and halted my gesture, speaking very excitedly, scolding me, and taking the weapon away from me as if it were a sacrilege.

The Cocozu and Anunze threaten the storm with their weapons, waving their arms in all directions and cursing the rain in loud yells.

Sometimes, instead, the women climb on a termite nest where they let out puffs of smoke and throw ashes into the air to frighten the storm.

764 We do not know anything as yet about their funeral rites. It has been ascertained, however, that they do not cremate their dead and do not eat them. They bury them directly [259] in the ground--
the Cocozu in circular pits, the Tagnani in elongated graves.